

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 349 334

TM 019 031

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TITLE IMPACT: How ORE Findings Have Affected Decisions in Austin and Beyond.
INSTITUTION Austin Independent School District, Tex. Office of Research and Evaluation.
REPORT NO AISD-91.20
PUB DATE Mar 92
NOTE 29p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Agency Role; Classroom Research; Compensatory Education; Decision Making; Dropout Research; Elementary Secondary Education; *Evaluation Utilization; Grade Repetition; Information Systems; Program Evaluation; *Research Utilization; *School Districts; *Time Factors (Learning)
IDENTIFIERS *Austin Independent School District TX; Hawkins Stafford Act 1988

ABSTRACT

Over the years, findings of the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) of the Austin (Texas) Independent School District (AISD) have had a significant impact on decisions made in the district and sometimes beyond it. The ORE's impact in the AISD is reviewed in 16 areas. Some of the major findings are summarized: (1) ORE studies of retention in grade have found that low achievers who were promoted made greater gains in the long run than did low achievers who were retained; (2) classroom observation studies established links between on-task time, total instructional time, and student learning; (3) evaluation of the impact of classroom aides found that undertrained aides actually interfered with the process of learning to read; (4) the ORE defined and developed the district's vanguard dropout tracking system, which became a national model; (5) Chapter 1 evaluation findings have had an important impact on the delivery of compensatory education services; and (6) the ORE has brought about significant changes in the district's information systems and has reduced paperwork. The ORE has made ongoing contributions to improving the management efficiency of research, evaluation, and testing in the AISD. Ninety-four references are grouped by topic. (SLD)

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Austin Independent School District
Department of Management Information
Office of Research and Evaluation

The following mission statement and ground rules serve to guide research and evaluation staff in the Austin Independent School District:

The mission of the Office of Research and Evaluation is to provide objective, useful, and timely information for decisionmaking.

- Student academic achievement is the outcome criterion on which a program should be judged. Whenever possible, program evaluations will assess impact on student achievement.
 - Programs are evaluated by individuals who are organizationally independent of the staff responsible for the successful implementation of the programs.
 - The evaluation report is the product of the author. Report drafts will be reviewed by program staff and others to ensure accuracy and completeness. However, the final contents of a report will be the sole responsibility of the Office of Research and Evaluation. If nonevaluation staff disagree with the final report, then a separate document may be produced to accompany the unedited evaluation report.
 - The work of the Office of Research and Evaluation is agreed upon and documented in the annual Research and Evaluation Agenda, which is developed through a collaborative effort involving all clients and audiences within the context of budget, legal, and policy mandates and current information needs.
 - The Office of Research and Evaluation is responsible for looking beyond AISD to review, analyze, and communicate useful and timely information from other agencies, universities, and school districts.
 - The Office of Research and Evaluation plans and coordinates all data collection activities to be efficient and reliable, and to limit the time and paperwork demands on students, staff, and other participants.
 - Standards for research, evaluation, and testing as established by professional and governmental organizations are followed. These include:
 - a) *Standards for Evaluations of Educational Programs, Projects, and Materials* developed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation
 - b) *Standards for Education Data Collection and Reporting* (SEDCAR)
 - c) *Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests*, American Psychological Association
 - d) *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*
- ORE also follows District policy and administrative regulations, which govern the proper role of ORE in the evaluation of programs, and the *Procedures Manual* for the Office of Research and Evaluation, which is maintained as a common core of understanding of the internal standards and procedures for all ORE staff to follow.
- As a consequence of the ambiguous nature and uses of certain measures in relation to student achievement, they are not used by ORE in evaluations. These measures include IQ tests and self-concept tests.

IMPACT: How ORE Findings Have Affected Decisions in Austin and Beyond! Executive Summary

Austin Independent School District
Department of Management Information
Office of Research and Evaluation

*Editors: David Wilkinson
Glynn Ligon*

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Austin Independent School District has made a commitment to research and evaluation for the past 18 years through its Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE). Since its inception in 1973, ORE has promoted the concept of rigorous and independent evaluation and has come to enjoy a national reputation for excellence. Whether the focus is a local priority or an area which has statewide or national significance, the mission of ORE is to provide unbiased, accurate, and timely information to decisionmakers. Over the years, ORE findings have had a significant impact on the decisions made in AISD, and sometimes beyond it. ORE staff have also been instrumental in streamlining systems to reduce paperwork requirements and manage information needs. ORE has made ongoing contributions to improving the management efficiency of research, evaluation, and testing conducted in the public schools.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. ORE studies of retention in grade have found that low achievers who were promoted made greater gains, in the long run, than low achievers who were retained. Acting on this information, elementary schools have dramatically reduced retention rates. Middle schools have also reduced retention rates. However, at the high school level, retention rates have continued to rise. (Page 7)
2. In 1975, ORE began a series of classroom observation studies that established the link between on-task time, total instructional time, and student learning in AISD. A notable increase in academic engaged time was observed after publication of ORE's findings. These findings were part of the information considered by the Texas Legislature before passage of school reform legislation in 1984. (Page 2)
3. Project ASSIST evaluation in 1973-74 demonstrated that undertrained aides actually interfered with the process of learning to read compared to reading instruction delivered by a regular classroom teacher. AISD began

reducing the number of instructional aides when this finding was duplicated across several other evaluations. (Page 2)

4. Beginning in 1983-84, ORE defined and developed AISD's vanguard dropout tracking system which became a basis for Texas' definition of a dropout and the model for the State tracking and reporting process. ORE was a national leader in the study of dropouts, and continues to provide critical dropout monitoring information for AISD. (Pages 6, 11)

5. Chapter 1 (previously Title I) evaluation findings have had an important impact on how compensatory education services are delivered to AISD students.

- The Overlap Study, conducted annually for the past 15 years, has provided a check on how many students are being served by more than one special program so that unique groups of students can be targeted for each program's services. (Page 2)

- Title I evaluation demonstrated the benefit of concentrating compensatory education services on the students with the greatest need. Local criteria were changed to serve only the lowest achieving students. (Page 3)

- Title I/Chapter 1 evaluations showed that pulling students out of their regular classrooms for small-group compensatory education was less effective than having the resource teacher go into the classroom to provide supplemental instruction. Similar national findings affirmed ORE's, and subsequent programs avoided the "pullout" approach. (Page 3)

- After ORE's 1984-85 evaluation of pre-K programs indicated that Chapter 1 pre-K classes were more effective than Migrant pre-K classes, the Chapter 1 curriculum was adopted for use by the Migrant program. Subsequent evaluation showed that Migrant pre-K gains increased. (Page 3)

6. ORE has effected significant changes in the District's information systems by making them more efficient and reducing campus-level paperwork.

- ORE has made AISD's testing program into an efficient, systemwide process for student assessment and school accountability. Since 1979-80, test results for grades 3-12 have been returned the Monday after answer sheets were turned in on Friday--weekend turn around. As a result, test results are available to students, parents, and schools early enough for parents to confer with teachers and counselors and for schools to set goals and target activities. (Pages 4, 9, 11)

- Beginning in 1979-80, ORE has conducted districtwide surveys of students, employees, and parents. ORE devised a sophisticated survey system that has increased the amount of information provided to departments and programs while reducing the amount of time individuals are required to spend to answer survey items. (Page 9)

- ORE was a founding department and a campaigner for the Information Services Committee, established in 1984. The ISC coordinates and manages all data collection in AISD, which means it works constantly to manage paperwork requirements. (Page 9)

- Since 1983-84, ORE has developed key computer files of test scores and membership in special programs and placed them on line for easy access by campus and departmental staff. (Page 11)

- In response to increasing information needs at a time of shrinking staff resources, ORE in 1988-89 created the GENeric Evaluation SYStem. GENESYS uses the District's extensive data bases, many produced by ORE, to provide rapidly a high volume of evaluation information about dozens of District programs. (Page 12)

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IMPACT

How ORE Findings Have Affected Decisions in Austin and Beyond!

INTRODUCTION

Impact--without it, the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) could simply be an administrative unit completing mandatory reports for the bookshelves of other governmental agencies. However, since its inception in 1973, ORE has promoted the concept of rigorous and independent evaluation and has come to enjoy a national reputation for excellence. Over the 18 years of its existence, ORE has had a significant impact on the decisions made in AISD, and sometimes beyond it. ORE staff have also been instrumental in streamlining systems to reduce paperwork requirements and manage information needs. ORE has made ongoing contributions to improving the management efficiency of research, evaluation, and testing conducted in the public schools.

To have impact, ORE must report its findings in ways that facilitate their understanding and use. This begins annually with the development of AISD's agenda for research and evaluation, a collaborative process through which ORE's tasks for the year are defined and agreed upon. However, over the years, ORE has worked to include in that agenda topics of emerging interest that have the greatest probability of impact. Some examples are the studies of instructional time use in the 70's, dropouts in the early 80's, retention in grade in the mid-80's, and student mobility in the 90's. In this way, ORE has contributed to AISD's ability to anticipate state and national trends, and even to be in the forefront of those trends.

From its earliest days, ORE has insisted on student achievement as the chief outcome criterion for measuring program success. If a program does not have a measurable impact on students' achievement, as measured by standardized tests, graduation rates, promotion rates, and other direct indicators of academic success, then ORE has been reluctant to classify a program as successful. ORE's direct impact has often been on how instruction and support services should be delivered to students in effective ways as opposed to many of the strategies that have proven neutral or ineffective with individual programs.

This document is a retrospective of the substantial impact ORE has had on AISD. AISD policies and procedures, program structures and delivery methods, as well as data collection in general, have been impacted. Citations of the original ORE report(s) in which the findings were published are included. Some of the entries do not have references, because they represent improvements in procedures within ORE or AISD, or more general efforts initiated or advanced by ORE.

IMPACT

Early Evaluations

- Project ASSIST evaluation in 1973-74 demonstrated that undertrained aides actually interfered with the process of learning to read compared to reading instruction delivered by a regular classroom teacher. AISD began reducing the number of instructional aides. (1, 2)
- ORE's 1976-77 evaluation of Individually Guided Education led the District to abandon this burdensome educational innovation. (3)
- In 1975, ORE began a series of classroom observation studies that established the link between on-task time, total instructional time, and student learning in AISD. A notable increase in academic engaged time was observed after publication of ORE's findings. These findings were part of the information considered by the Texas Legislature before passage of school reform legislation in 1984. (4, 5, 6, 7)
- ORE has conducted an Overlap Study for 15 years to check how many students were being served by one or more special programs. Early reports found that nearly 2,500 students were being served by two or more pullout programs and not spending enough time in their regular education program. Based on this study, future compensatory education programs were planned to target more unique groups of students. (8, 9, 10)
- ORE investigated the relationship between affective measures and achievement in the mid-70's and found no significant correlation between them. As a consequence, AISD discontinued the use of self-concept tests and similar measures in program objectives. (11)
- Successive State Compensatory Education evaluations (1979-80 through 1980-81) found no significant impact on achievement being produced by the SCE Writing Labs in grades 9-12. These findings contributed to their discontinuation. (12, 13)
- ORE's 1980-81 finding that student reading achievement declined with participation in the Color Sounds Project led the District to terminate its involvement in the program. (14)
- The Drugs Off Campus program was discontinued at the junior high level the second year after 1981-82 evaluation results showed drug-sniffing dogs did not detect any illegal drugs at Martin Junior High School, while teachers did. (15, 16)

Title I/Chapter 1

- Title I evaluation demonstrated the benefit of concentrating compensatory education services on the students with the greatest need. Local criteria for Title I, later Chapter 1, were changed to serve only the lowest achieving students. (17)
- Title I/Chapter 1 evaluations showed that pulling students out of their regular classrooms for small group compensatory education was less effective than having the resource teacher go into the classroom to work alongside the regular teacher. Later findings showed that the key was communication and coordination between the regular teacher and the resource teacher more than the location of the compensatory instruction. Compensatory education program achievement results improved with the implementation of these findings. (23, 24)
- In 1980-81, ORE found no impact on attendance for students for whom the Migrant program bought clothing. This finding, coupled with the staff's documented dissatisfaction with the whole process of the clothing component and expected funding cuts in 1981-82, led to the decision to redirect the funds for the purchase of clothing to direct instruction. (23)
- After four years of evaluations (1981-82 through 1984-85) showing that kindergarten students served by the Chapter 1 Supplementary Program did no better than kindergarten students who were not served at all, Chapter 1 discontinued serving kindergarten students with the supplementary program. (17, 18, 19, 20)
- After ORE's 1984-85 evaluation of pre-K programs indicated that Chapter 1 pre-K classes were more effective than Migrant pre-K classes, the Chapter 1 curriculum was adopted for use by the Migrant program. Subsequent evaluation results supported the change: Migrant pre-K gains increased, and the gains of the two programs became more similar than different. (20, 21)
- Based upon ORE's reports of their not being effective in improving students' achievement, teacher aides were eliminated at the pre-K level when funding cuts were inevitable. The 1990-91 evaluation documented that the pre-K program continued to make strong achievement gains without the aides. (22)

Systemwide Testing

- ORE assumed responsibility for AISD's testing program in 1975-76. Over the years, brochures and reports have been created and revised to better meet the needs of schools, parents, and students. A number of ORE reports and printouts have helped schools determine areas of success and areas in need of improvement. Achievement test results, including the Report on School Effectiveness (ROSE), have been used by schools for years to set school goals and target activities. (25, 27, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37)
- In 1978-79 and before, AISD schools received their achievement test results the last week of school. Beginning in 1979-80, ORE reorganized and dedicated extra weekend hours to returning test results for grades 3-12 the Monday after answer sheets were turned in on Friday--weekend turnaround. The impact has been that test results can go home to parents while there is still time for them to confer with teachers and counselors. (30)
- ORE designed and implemented AISD's high school graduation minimum competency testing in 1978-79, which predated Texas' 1984 Exit-Level TEAMS graduation requirement (for 1986-87 seniors) by seven years. After originally using the California Achievement Tests (CAT), in 1982-83 ORE developed five equivalent forms of Austin's BEST (Basic Educational Skills Test) that was our local minimum competency examination until it was replaced by the TEAMS. The impact was that more AISD graduates had the minimum skills expected of high school graduates. (29, 32)
- During the 1982-83 school year, ORE worked with the Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee to establish a procedure for testing or exempting special education students from standardized testing. This allowed for more informed decisions about participation by individual students in testing. This procedure has been studied by districts nationwide and was cited as a model by the Steering Committee for the National Assessment Project of the Council of Chief State School Officers. (38)
- As a response to House Bill 72's requirements for advanced placement examinations, ORE coordinated the development and administration of the Computer Literacy Test (COLT) in 1985-86. Students who pass this test are eligible to take the Computer Literacy Advanced Placement Test (AP Test) to obtain credit for seventh grade Computer Literacy. The following year, ORE coordinated with The University of Texas and Elementary Education in the development and pilot testing of advanced placement exams for grades 1-6. As a result, more AISD students are able to take advantage of these options for receiving credit. (26)

Bilingual Education

- ORE findings that tutors as used in the 1987-88 Title VII bilingual program were not effective contributed to discontinuing their use. The college student tutors were generally not bilingual and received little training in tutoring techniques. (39)
- ORE findings in 1985-86 that students served by bilingual aides did not show higher achievement than those not served contributed to discontinuing the hiring of bilingual aides. (42)

Science Academy

- In 1984-85, ORE devoted one-half position for a year to planning and establishing the Science Academy of Austin. ORE played an important part in shaping the program by preselecting potentially eligible students, developing potential criteria for admission, estimating the impact of the magnet program on other schools, and evaluating the progress of the Academy each year. (45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50)

Merit Scholars

- ORE helped plan, provided selection lists and criteria, and taught some of the classes for AISD's preparation classes for students who were potential National Merit Scholars, National Achievement Award recipients, and National Hispanic Scholars as a way to improve student performance on these examinations.

Needs Assessment

- ORE's annual needs assessments for Chapter 1, Priority Schools, Migrant, SCE, and pre-K programs determine which campuses receive services and which students are eligible. The Chapter 2 Needs Assessment data collected by ORE influence program choices for funding. For example, the Spanish Academy and the PAL programs continue to be funded--partly as a result of positive needs assessment and evaluation findings. (51, 52)

Dropouts

- ORE's 1983 landmark study of dropouts, "Mother Got Tired of Taking Care of My Baby": A Study of Dropouts from AISD, garnered national and state attention to the dropout problem and fostered local action. In response to the study, a dropout prevention task force was created in 1983-84. The work of the task force resulted in a number of districtwide changes, among them the appointment of a full-time dropout prevention coordinator and a mandate to ORE to put into place a system for the annual reporting of a valid dropout rate for each high school campus. (53)
- In 1987-88, ORE found that students who participated in the School Community Guidance Center at Rice because of discipline problems were at high risk of dropping out once they returned to home schools. The finding that those who stayed two semesters had lower dropout rates than those who stayed one semester influenced staff to develop more flexible entry and exit criteria. Discussions and findings also contributed to decisions to reunite the middle school and senior high at one campus, to hire more regular teachers as opposed to permanent substitutes, and to provide more group counseling for students. (59, 60)
- The progress of students in AISD's Transitional Academic Program (TAP) and Academic Incentive Program (AIP), initiated as alternatives to retention, has been of interest statewide. In 1987-88, ORE found AIP students subsequently had lower dropout rates and higher grade point averages than TAP students. A possible factor is the extra school relocation required for most TAP students. In 1988-89, many TAP students were served in home high schools rather than Rice and Robbins Secondary Schools, eliminating one school change. (59, 60, 62, 63)
- ORE was largely responsible for the District's receiving federal grant funds for a dropout intervention program which began operating as Project GRAD (Grant Research About Dropouts) in 1988-89. ORE's evaluation of the project gave new impetus to concerns about the dropout situation and influenced District planning through the formation of the Zero Dropout Momentum Team. (55, 58)
- In 1988-89, ORE developed new methods and forms for the documentation of student transfer outside of AISD. These improved methods expanded the District's ability to track students and to document their transfer, which contributed to a lower dropout rate. (56)
- ORE's 1988-89 and 1989-90 evaluations of Project GRAD found insufficient evidence of the effectiveness of the part-time Dropout Prevention Specialists to warrant continuing the position with local funds. The position was dropped in 1990-91. (58)

Retention

- > ORE reports have found that retention is not beneficial to most students' long-term achievement and is associated with high dropout risk. These findings influenced state policy through AISD's legislative liaison. The policy allows placement of students if special help is provided. The findings also have influenced AISD, contributing to lower overall retention rates in recent years. (62, 63)
- > ORE studies of retention in grade have found that low achievers who were promoted made greater gains, in the long run, than low achievers who were retained. Acting on this information, elementary schools have dramatically reduced retention rates. Middle schools have also reduced retention rates. However, at the high school level, retention rates have continued to rise. (61, 64, 65)

Personnel Evaluation

- > ORE coordinated development of AISD professional, administrative, and nonteaching professional evaluation systems. The professional system was used for 8 years until the Texas Teacher Appraisal System (TTAS) was adopted statewide, the administrative system was used until 1991-92, and the nonteaching system is still in place. These objective-based systems provide specific feedback to evaluators and those evaluated on strengths and areas for improvement so staff training can follow. (66, 67)

Gifted/Talented

- > ORE findings regarding the documentation of which students were gifted/talented and how they were served led to a 1986-87 revision of the student computer file and more active attention to counting students. This improved file (now revised again) is the basis for state-required counts. (68, 69)

Teach and Reach

- > ORE's evaluations of Project Teach and Reach in 1984-85 and 1985-86, and subsequent analyses using ORE's GENeric Evaluation SYStem (GENESYS), determined that the project was expensive and had mixed effects on student achievement at best. ORE findings contributed to the School Board's decision in 1990-91 to revamp the program into a computer initiative. (70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76)

Special Education

- ORE statements in its 1986-87 Report to the Special Education Services Committee about the administrative structure for handling special education referrals contributed to an administrative reorganization the following year. (77, 78)
- In 1987-88, ORE assisted in the effort to remove the backlog of special education assessments by producing accurate data about the number of incomplete assessments and a program for monitoring progress.

Drug-Free Schools

- Comments made in ORE's 1989-90 and 1990-91 Drug-Free Schools evaluation reports about the District's lack of both a comprehensive drug and alcohol prevention program and a person to coordinate drug-free prevention efforts contributed to the 1990-91 creation of a Department of Student Support Services and the hiring, in 1991-92, of a full-time program facilitator. (79, 80)
- In response to the need documented in its 1989-90 evaluation of Drug-Free Schools for better assessment of student drug and alcohol use, ORE worked in cooperation with the Division of Secondary Education to create an anonymous survey which dealt with drug and alcohol use, among other issues, which was administered in 1990-91 to a one-third sample of middle school students. Many of the items were taken from a statewide survey developed by the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse and Texas A & M University. With ORE's support, the complete survey will be administered in 1991-92 to a sample of students in grades 4-12. (79, 80)

Faculty/Staff

- ORE's reports on the percentages of professionals and administrators in the job market contributed to a 1989 change in policy to target recruitment and promotion goals based on market availability rather than student enrollments. (81)

Test Selection

- ORE has played a central role in the review and selection of District tests. Usually working with a test selection committee, but sometimes on its own, ORE has been instrumental in the decisions to adopt the ITBS in 1979-80 for grades 1-8, the kindergarten ITBS in 1981-82, the TAP in 1983-84, the IDEA Oral Language Proficiency Test in 1986-87, and the Bracken Basic Concepts Scale in 1991-92. These tests have provided AISD with an enormous amount of information on which to base instructional and programmatic decisions. (22, 30, 40, 82, 83)

PAPERWORK MANAGEMENT

- Sixteen years ago, ORE instituted the practice of preprinting from computer files student/teacher/school information on scanner forms and reports to improve accuracy and reduce the paperwork burden on school personnel. ORE's pioneer use of preprinted testing answer sheets influenced the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in 1981-82 to offer preprinted answer documents on the TABS, the precursor to the TEAMS and TAAS, a practice which continues to the present.
- Answer sheets now have preprinted identifying information for all tests, both local and state-required, so that campus staff do not have to provide data manually as is necessary in other districts.
- When identification of limited English-proficient students became a requirement in 1977, ORE established computerized files and reports that track LEP students and notify schools of testing and assessment requirements and timelines. Over the years, ORE has worked closely with bilingual/ESL staff to refine forms and files used in LEP processing. The result has been improved information on and services to these students with less paperwork. (40, 41, 42, 43, 44)
- Beginning in 1979-80, ORE redesigned and implemented a districtwide survey procedure that has increased the number of items being asked by departments and programs while greatly reducing the time personnel are required to spend to answer those items. This paperwork reduction effort also greatly reduces the number of surveys each professional and administrator receives in a year. (84, 85, 86, 87)
- In 1983-84, ORE reorganized and computerized the vocational counselors' annual high school student survey and combined it with other surveys. This reduced the intrusion into class time, reduced the paperwork on campuses, and enabled counselors to identify students interested in various courses more easily. (84, 85, 86, 87)
- ORE was a founding department and a campaigner for the Information Services Committee, established in 1984. The ISC coordinates and monitors all data collection in AISD. That means the ISC works constantly to manage paperwork requirements.
- In 1984-85, ORE worked closely with the ISC to redesign the student registration form to combine seven separate forms completed by hand annually into one with computer-printed information for returning students. This reduced paperwork and also saved parents' and teachers' time.

- > The following year, the ISC set up a process to screen surveys and requests for information which would have, in the past, been sent to campuses for data gathering by administration staff, office staff, or teachers. Through the organization of the data collected, a data bank has been established so that information requested can be provided without gathering it a second or third time. This practice has saved countless hours of data gathering. (88)
- > ORE effected a major reduction in the paperwork associated with limited-English-proficient (LEP) students, both in what is kept as campus documentation and in what is sent to the central office. The annual review process was streamlined by preprinting more required information on the review forms and reducing the overall number of annual reviews through negotiation with TEA. (40, 43)
- > Some special education forms have been simplified. ORE studied the referral process during the 1986-87 school year, and a special committee used that report as the basis for recommendations for streamlining the referral process. (77, 78)
- > Rosters are now computer generated for teachers of students in special programs and provided to the teachers rather than being handwritten by the teachers.
- > In 1986-87, ORE created a scannable document, the Record of Student Service (ROSS), for collecting program participation information. The form reduces the amount of time teachers must spend providing updated information about students who are served by programs such as Chapter 1 and Chapter 1 Migrant. Also, the need to keep separate rosters of Chapter 1 participants for both Chapter 1 instructional coordinators and ORE was eliminated in 1987-88.
- > All PEIMS data are read from existing computer files for both the fall and spring reports to TEA. The only campus data collection is daily schedules for elementary teachers. The daily schedule documentation was designed by the Department of Management Information to be simpler, with preprinted information from the computer whenever possible, than the formats provided by TEA.
- > A 1989-90 ORE study of automation in the Personnel Department clarified areas in which automation was already present and in which it could be extended to save paperwork. (89)
- > In the spring of 1991, ORE designed an on-line system for documenting student transfer out of AISD. The following fall, registrars were able to document their transferring students directly on-line, decreasing the amount of paperwork required.

RESEARCH, EVALUATION, AND TESTING MANAGEMENT EFFICIENCY

- For the past 13 years, ORE has coordinated a process to screen requests by external agencies or individuals to conduct research in AISD. In screening requests to collect data from or about AISD students or staff, some requests are rejected because of the inappropriateness of the topic or the time involved in collection. The approved research projects have a higher degree of promise for resulting in findings useful to AISD. (90, 91, 92, 93)
- Beginning in 1983-84, ORE defined and developed AISD's vanguard dropout tracking system which became a basis for Texas' definition of a dropout and the model for the State's tracking and reporting process. ORE was a national leader in dropout counting and tracking, and continues to lead the nation in public school dropout monitoring programs. Lists provided to schools have helped identify potential dropouts for possible prevention/intervention efforts. (58)
- ORE provides the schools with several documents to make dropout prevention efforts and compliance with State requirements more efficient. They include a listing of students who meet the TEA definition of being at risk, the previous year's attendance information for students who are new to the school, and six weeks reports identifying current dropouts for the year.
- Since 1983-84, ORE has developed a number of on-line systems which have reduced the amount of staff time required to access important student information such as test scores and membership in special programs. With some of these systems, users have also been able to perform data entry transactions such as recording requests for transcripts (vital in dropout tracking).
- In 1986-87, ORE designed a system to preslug and score TEAMS practice tests (grades 3-8) and end-of-basal tests (grades 3-6). Teachers receive individual student scores as well as class summaries. This system saves teachers from having to score and summarize this information themselves and gives them quick feedback.
- ORE produces classroom summaries of test scores (ITBS/TAP and TAAS) which help teachers plan instruction and group students. This saves teachers time in that they do not have to look up individual students' scores and summarize them.
- Test results are provided in formats that save teachers from having to go to permanent records for test scores. Test scores are printed on secondary teachers' class record books, secondary scheduling forms, secondary achievement summaries by classrooms and alphabetical listings, rank-order listings and skills analyses for all levels.

- In 1988-89, ORE consolidated all available information on advanced placement from TEA, UT, and AISD into an AP notebook with work sheets for principals and order forms to purchase tests from UT. This saves principals' time and avoids duplication of effort.
- In response to increasing information needs at a time of shrinking staff resources, ORE in 1988-89 created the **GENeric Evaluation SYStem**. GENESYS uses the District's extensive data bases, many produced by ORE, to provide rapidly a high volume of information about programs of interest to District administrators and program staff, such as the Kealing Magnet Program. (72, 75, 76)
- The Effective School Standards Report (ESSR), originally developed in 1987-88 at the request of the Department of Elementary Education for the Priority Schools, has been expanded to all elementary campuses because it was found valuable by schools. The ESSR compiles for the campuses information on student and teacher absences, parent opinions on effectiveness, and TAAS and ITBS results. (94)

REFERENCES

EARLY EVALUATIONS

Project ASSIST

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